THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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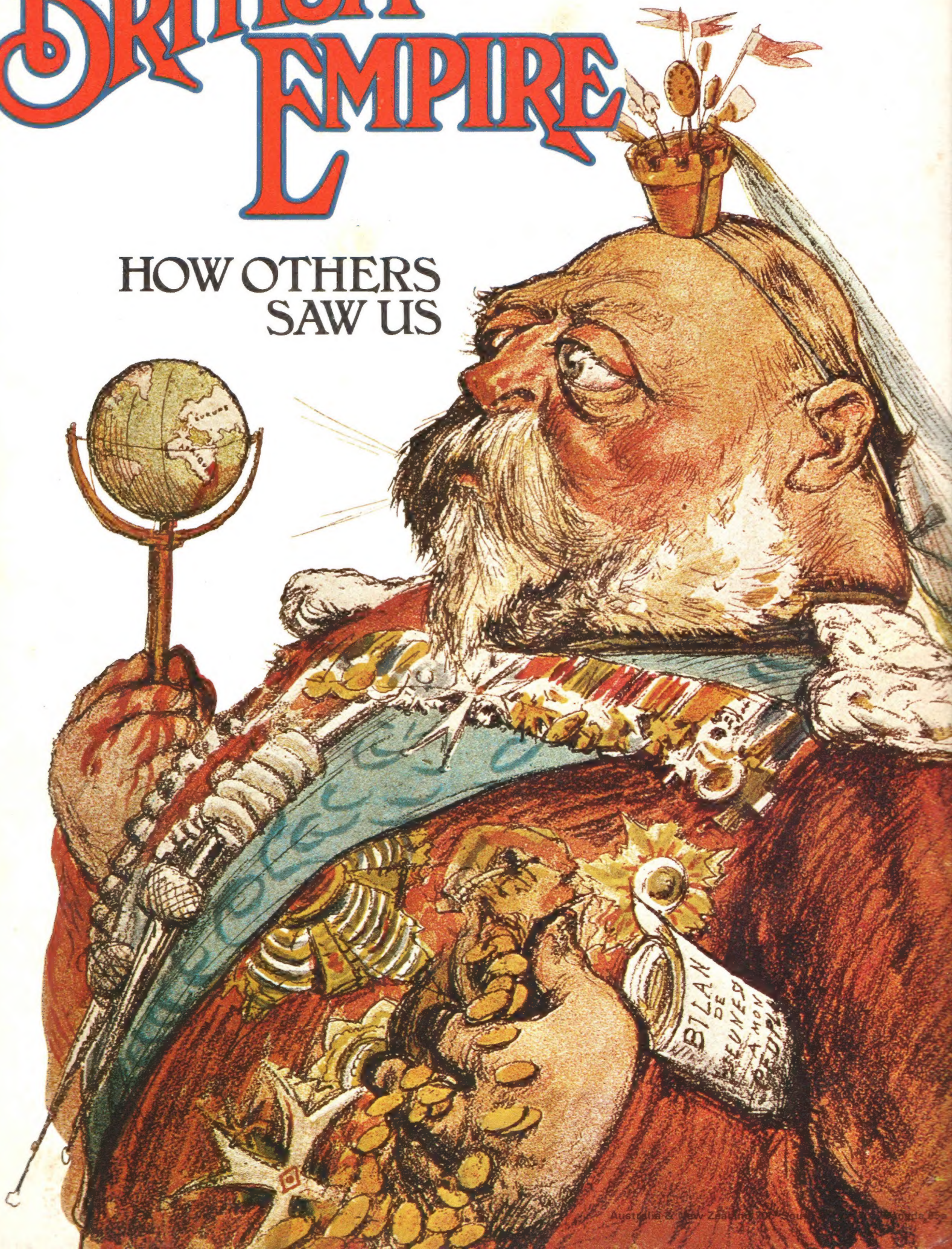
No. 92

HOW OTHERS SAW US



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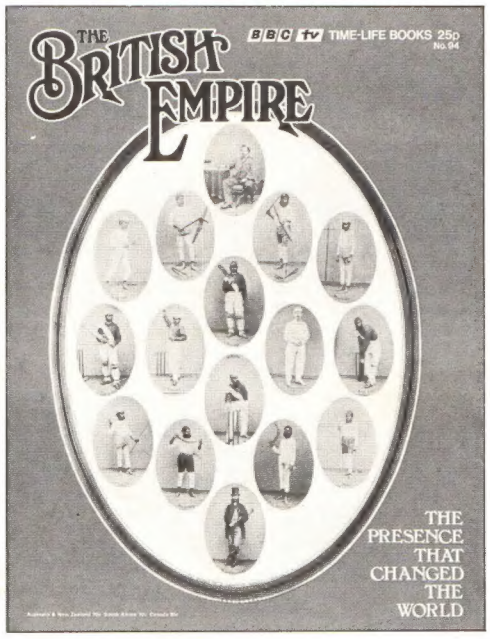

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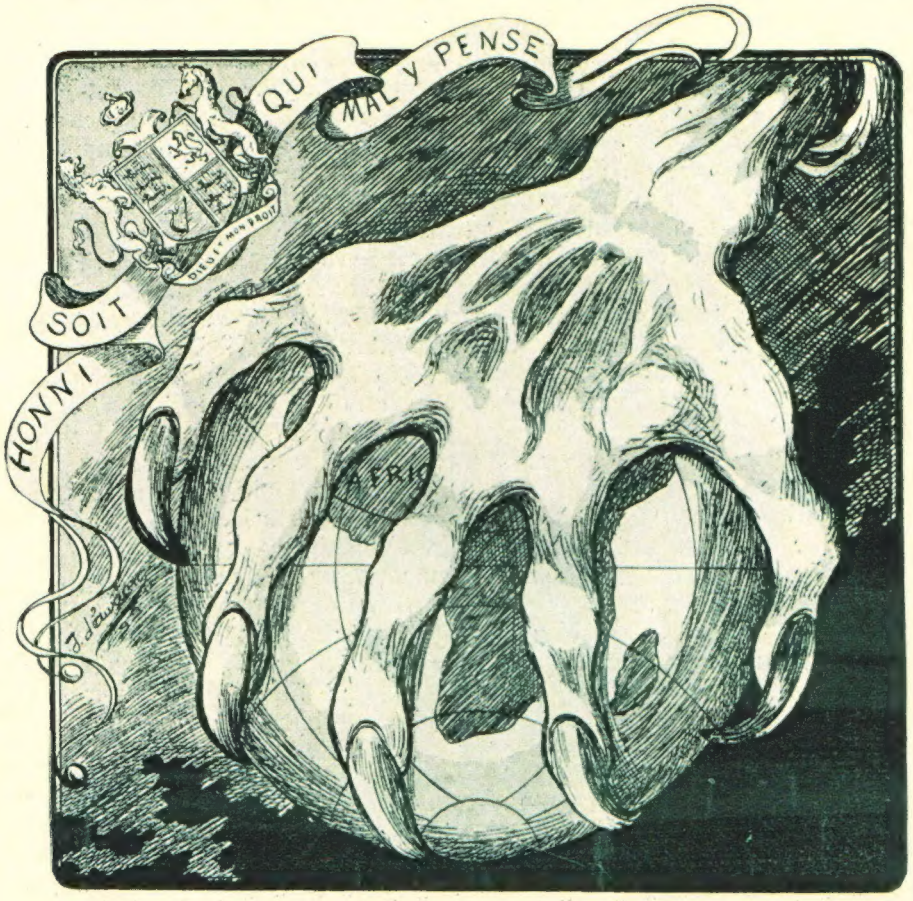
HOW OTHERS SAW US



The British tended to see their Empire as a God-given instrument for spreading civilization to the backward areas of the earth. Other nations, however, looked upon British territorial control with a more jaundiced, though often equally unrealistic, eye. The cartoon, shown above, gives a startling picture of one French idea of the British Empire, a Satanic claw clutching the world, with no indication of the lofty ideals the British fondly believed were clear to all. Its asperity is typical. Germany and Russia too – in the popular Press if not in official policy statements – were happy to condemn out of hand the fact of Britain's control as well as its errors.

By David Heald

Five years after Britain's Pyrrhic victory in the Boer War, in December, 1907, Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India from 1898 to 1905, gave an address on "The True Imperialism" at the Town Hall, Birmingham. Reading his words now, one would think that Britain's far-flung imperial designs were based on high ideals and Christian philanthropy alone.

"Wherever this Empire has extended its borders," he declaimed in suitably ringing phrases, "there misery and oppression, anarchy and destitution, superstition and bigotry, have tended to disappear, and have been replaced by peace, justice, prosperity, humanity and freedom of thought, speech and action . . . Imperialism is . . . animated by the supreme idea, without which it is only as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, viz. the sense of sacrifice and . . . duty."

This was how many British liked to see their Empire. There were faults, no doubt, but nothing, it was generally thought, to permanently dull the lustre conjured up by Curzon's words. There were indeed those – Socialists and Communists – who proclaimed that the roots of imperialism lay in capital investment abroad and that Britain, along with other imperialist powers, was nothing but an unscrupulous exploiter of the underdeveloped areas of the world. But they were as yet no more than a vocal minority. British imperial rule was still widely considered the best in the world.

It is salutary to see that other nations – principally France, America, Germany and Russia – judged the British in rather different terms. Their attitudes, as expressed in the popular Press, in cartoons and later in films, readily condemned the British as jealous, aggressive, inhuman and rapacious, and those few good things to be said about the Empire in no way redressed the balance. John Bull was transformed by continental cartoonists – at least at times of dispute – from the powerful, self-confident figure of British caricature into a paunchy bully.

Curzon was perhaps overstating his case, but he needed to: Britain had just endured her bitterest war for half a century, and in addition suffered the abuse of other nations. The vast military and industrial commitment to the war and the depth of the political implications for the future of Africa, newly divided among the European powers, had brought foreign antagonism towards Britain's imperial role to new heights. Mrs. Beatrice Webb, eminent Socialist, social historian and diarist, noted that Britain's unpopularity abroad had rarely been greater. From Paris to St. Petersburg the pro-Boer propagandists heaped scorn and venom on Britain: "Who can fail to be depressed," she wrote, "at the hatred of England on the Continent?"

These views should not be surprising. The national image that one nation creates for itself may be, and indeed usually is, very different from the one that other, rival nations create for it; historical events and characters which are for one nation a source of pride and veneration are for another objects of execration. Anybody who bothers to compare British and French or German history books will note wide discrepancies. In many French school books, Waterloo is regarded not as a defeat but a strategic withdrawal, and Agincourt and Crécy are not even mentioned. In many English history books Napoleon, a hero to millions of Frenchmen, is no more than a tyrant.

Nor was the hostility noted by Mrs. Webb a new or isolated phenomenon.

A German cartoon sums up what most of the world and, indeed, many people at home thought of Britain's attempts to force opium on China in the Opium War of 1839–42.

Britain's emergence as the world's prime imperial power in the early 19th Century made her an object of particular interest for lesser – and often equally ambitious – powers. While British writers stressed the altruistic nature of the Pax Britannica, other nations viewed the development of her commercial interests and her extensions of territory merely as the outward signs of political power and her expressions of philanthropy as moralistic cant.

Jealous rivalry played a major role in this, and Britain's three main imperial rivals in the 19th Century – France, Russia and Germany – all spawned particularly violent anti-British attitudes at the times of greatest rivalry, between 1880 and 1914. Moreover, the attitudes then established proved remarkably resilient: during the Second World War, the Nazis produced some anti-British propaganda that would have delighted the heart of those who at the turn of the century had sought to establish Germany's place in the imperial sun.

One country that might have been expected to harbour a permanent grudge against the Empire – America – in fact was seldom virulently anti-British. Despite her violent rejection of British control in 1776, in the 19th Century anti-British feeling only ran high during the American Civil War.

America's attitude was generally a curious blend of emotions. Britain might be a braggart of a country, eager to seize other people's territories, but she was not to be taken too seriously: after all she had been beaten twice, once in 1776 and again (at least in their opinion) in the War of 1812. On the other hand, Americans still looked to Britain for leadership in culture, literature and the arts. Northerners admired Britain for her humanitarian stand against slavery. Southerners were great admirers of British aristocratic manners and traditions.

As a result, when the Civil War broke out both sides expected British support. The South wanted diplomatic recognition as an independent nation. The North wanted Britain to join the crusade against slavery. Both were disappointed: Britain declared herself neutral and preserved her contacts with both sides.

The North was incensed, since the declaration of neutrality accorded recog-

The World's Hero

Though Britain as an imperial power was the object of criticism on the part of her imperial rivals, this was not always so. During the Indian Mutiny, for instance, the British (despite some accusations of brutality) won widespread sympathy from the Continent and America, where the Press and politicians identified with the British in their struggle to bring Civilization and Christianity to a benighted India.

Two events in particular – the sieges of Lucknow and Cawnpore – were followed by the public in many countries with an avid interest. When Lucknow was relieved, the commander of the incoming force, the previously unknown Sir Henry Havelock, awoke almost as much admiration abroad as he did among his own people.

By the time this slender, small (he was only 5 foot 6 inches tall), abstemious and cold man had led a force to relieve nearby Cawnpore, he had a following to rival Nelson's. And when he died on November 24, 1857, aged 62, from "dysentery, brought on," – in the words of the official telegram, – "by exposure and anxiety," the mourning equalled that accorded to Nelson. The telegram, wrote the *Quarterly Review*, "seemed to dash down every satisfaction . . . public opinion had made him the hero of the hour. It seemed as if all men felt a self-reproach that he had not been known before."

The British were joined in their eulogies by the French and the Americans. In France, a Count Montalembert praised "the noble Havelock, who . . . declared that it becomes not Christian soldiers to take heathen butchers for their models. This name of Havelock recalls and sums up all the virtues which the English have exercised in this gigantic strife. Havelock, a personage of an antique grandeur, resembling in their most beautiful and irreproachable aspects the great Puritans of the 17th Century and who had arrived at the portals of age before he shone out to view, and was thrown suddenly into a struggle with a great peril before him . . . surmounted everything by his religious courage, and attained, by a single stroke, to glory and that immense popularity which resounds everywhere; then died, before he had enjoyed it, occupied, especially in his last moments, as he had been all his life, with the . . . propagation of Christianity in India."

The Americans greeted his death with an extraordinary gesture: the flags of all shipping in New York, Boston and Baltimore were flown at half-mast from 9 a.m. until sunset. As the *New York Times* reported: "It was a purely voluntary tribute paid to his memory by a people to whom he was a stranger, who were in no way interested in his career, and to whom even his name was unknown six months since. It was a tribute of respect which even the Duke of Wellington did not command, and which we believe was never before paid to a foreigner. But 'one touch of nature makes the whole world kin'; and the bravery and manliness of this true hero have touched the hearts of the people of this country, who have watched his career with eager solicitude. . . . The intelligence of his death has produced as deep a feeling of regret as though he had been a countryman of our own. . . . His position was an accidental one; the command of the army was forced upon him by circumstances, and not conferred by the appointing power. But he proved himself equal to the emergencies; the heroic qualities of his nature and his capacities as a soldier must often have been exhibited during his long and eventful military career, but they were never appreciated or acknowledged, and he would have passed away in the great caravan of undistinguished dead but for the Sepoy revolt. Certainly no English soldier ever before excited so marked a feeling of sympathy among the American people as has been done by General Havelock; and we may feel proud that no considerations of national jealousy prevented a spontaneous expression of such generous impulses."

nition to the South as a belligerent. It was further incensed when a British firm contracted to sell the South a destroyer, the *Alabama*. Under pressure from the North, the British government issued an order to detain the vessel. It was too late: for two years, the ship, superbly equipped and well manned, almost drove Northern shipping from the seas.

In retaliation, a Northern vessel, the *San Jacinto*, boarded a British mail-ship, the *Trent*, and seized two Southern emissaries to Britain, James Mason and John Slidell.

For a time, it seemed that Britain would break relations entirely with the North, but the crisis was resolved with good sense and diplomacy. Prince Albert altered a stiff official memorandum to President Lincoln in such a way that he was able to release the two envoys without loss of dignity.

The *Alabama* dispute, however, dragged on for almost a decade. The U.S. Minister to Britain accused Britain of "criminal intent" in selling the *Alabama*

In an American Civil War cartoon John Bull feeds the rebellious South with British finance.

to the South. The Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, replied that there could be no official responsibility for the fitting-out of "a seeming merchant ship" as a vessel of war and that to refuse the sale would have been an infringement of Britain's neutrality. The dispute was eventually resolved in 1871 by a remarkable piece of international arbitration by which Britain paid the United States compensation of $15,500,000.

In no European country was anti-British sentiment more traditional or more persistent than in France. A long history of colonial rivalry and centuries of war ensured that admiration (there was some: in the 18th Century, a few French philosophers praised England as a model of liberalism, tolerance and equity) remained a rarity.

The mid-18th Century was not an auspicious time for Anglo-French relations, for France lost both Canada and India – and thereby a potentially valuable trading empire – to Britain. Albion, as well as being perfidious, could now be castigated as a profiteer and the "shopkeeper mentality" – later immortalized in Napoleon's characterization of Britain as "a nation of shopkeepers" – came increasingly to be seen as the source and inspiration of British imperial power. One of the 18th-Century rationalist philosophers, the Baron d'Holbach, denounced England as "the abode of corruption, discord, venality, melancholy, boredom" and condemned the English obsession with money and commerce. Denis Diderot, whose 28-volume *Encyclopédie* stands as a monument to 18th-Century rationalism, defined tyranny and oppression as the product of illiberal commercial systems and urged the people of India to rise up against the British East India Company: "Sooner or later justice must be done. I would say to the people: you, whose roaring has so often made your masters tremble, what are you waiting for? For what moment are you reserving your torches and paving stones? Pick them up!"

In the 19th Century, many Frenchmen of all classes, unable to forget Waterloo and the glories of the Napoleonic era, harboured feelings of revenge towards England, which was seen as sitting complacently on former French territories enveloped by a cloud of smugness and hypocrisy. John Bull was thought of as a bully whose fine philanthropic phrases failed to mask the mean, mercantilist spirit behind them. As one French historian, Paul Gaffarel, wrote: "England seizes everything that seems to her good to take or to keep." Another historian, Jules Michelet, claimed that Britain, though rich and powerful, was sterile and soulless, driven on solely by the lust for material gain. A French cartoon during the Opium War (1839–42) shows a British admiral forcing opium down the throat of a passive Chinaman. (A fair enough comment: politicians at home condemned the trade, yet troops were provided for the East India Company, who supplied the drug to China.) British

Another American cartoon, drawn after Britain sold the South a gunboat, the *Alabama*, shows John Bull as a gross and immoral shopkeeper.

actions during the Indian Mutiny of 1857, such as blasting mutineers to bits with cannons, were widely held in France (and in other European countries) to be typical of British brutality. One Englishman protested vainly against the continental image of "John Bull with the large and taloned hands, the creation of the French caricaturists."

Anglo-French relations – at least on this superficial level indicated by the Press – deteriorated further in the latter half of the 19th Century, soured above all by the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 and the subsequent advance into the Sudan that eventually led to the classic clash of British and French ambitions on the Upper Nile at Fashoda.

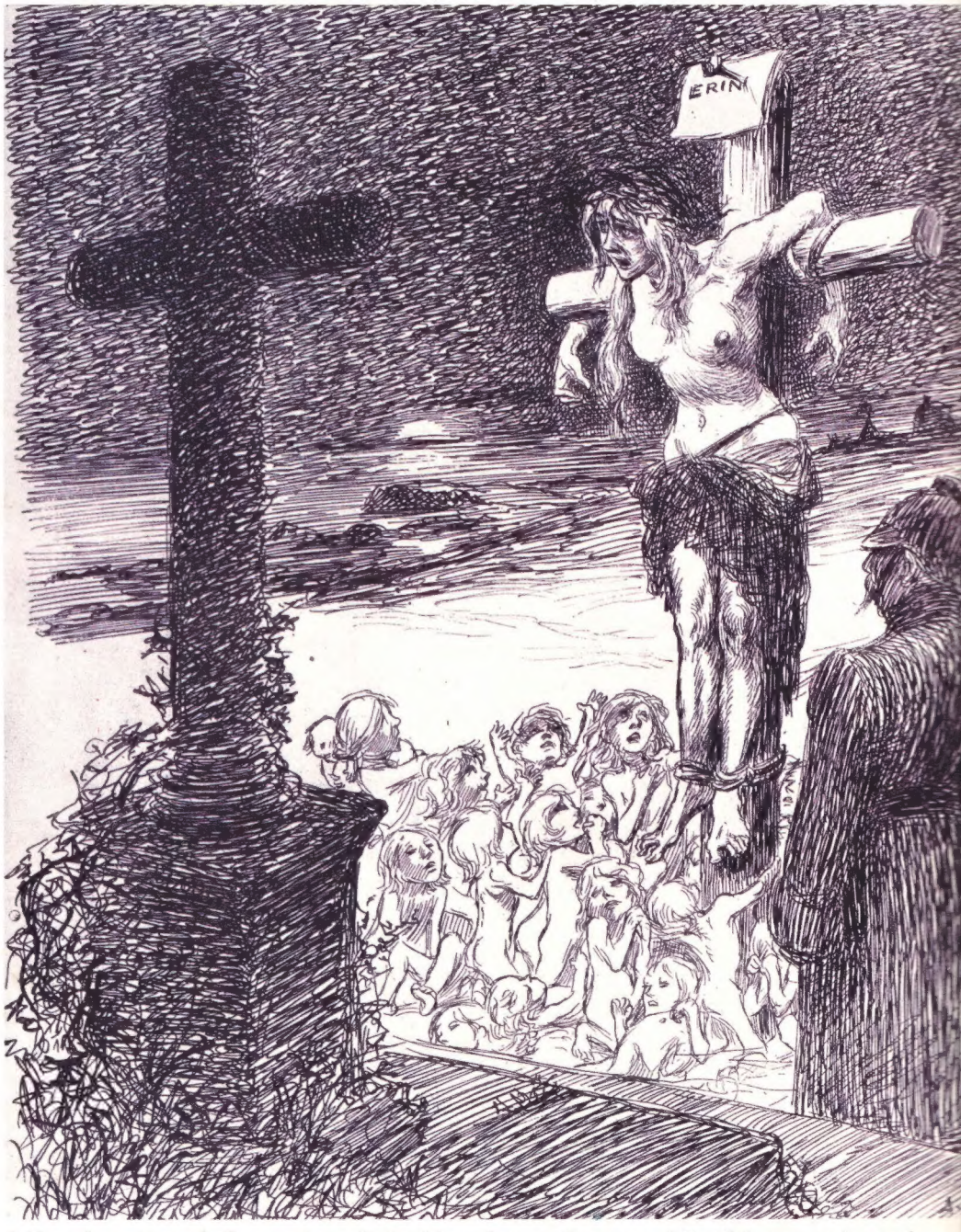
Since General Gordon's defeat and death at the hands of the Mahdi in 1885, the Sudan and all the Upper Nile had been out of reach to European powers. One day, the British realized, the Sudan would have to be reconquered for the sake of guaranteeing the security of Egypt, of Suez, of the route to India. In 1896, General Herbert Kitchener was ordered to crush the Mahdist forces and occupy Khartoum and then continue south to ensure a British presence on the Upper Nile. But the French, too, were interested in occupying the region and dispatched a mission under Captain Jean-Baptiste Marchand through the Congo with the aim of establishing a prior claim there.

Marchand arrived first on July 10, 1898. Kitchener, having defeated the Dervishes at Omdurman, arrived on September 19. There the two stayed for three weeks, while in Europe a crisis developed that nearly drove Britain and France to war.

The conflict was stimulated largely by British intransigence. The French Foreign Minister, Théophile Delcassé, was eager to avoid a confrontation. He told a British journalist, Wilfred Blunt, that "nobody in France knew where Fashoda was or cared three straws about the Marchand mission," and pooh-poohed the crisis as a dispute over "a country inhabited by monkeys and by black men worse than monkeys." He assured the British Ambassador in Paris that Marchand was "only an emissary of civilization" and was not an instrument of government.

The British reaction was unbending: the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, insisted that the Upper Nile was British by right of conquest, and the Press too, insisted that France withdraw. "Of what value is Fashoda to France," wrote the *Times* correspondent in a special article in *Le Matin*, "in comparison to the price which England places upon it?"

This attitude led, in its turn, to a sudden hardening of France's position. Delcassé declared publicly that France would go to war rather than swallow "such an insult to national honour." The French Press took up the cry. The nationalist paper, *L'Autorité*, proclaimed: "They must have a pitiful idea in London of our government if they suppose that it is capable of cowardice in the face of such



A French cartoon of 1899 portrays Ireland hanging on the cross of English oppression and crying out: "Oh God, I have begged for help for so long! Could it be that you are English?"

Jubilation and Denigration

In 1897, the British, convinced that they were divinely ordained to be the best nation in the world, celebrated Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee as a massive paean to the magnificence of the British Empire.

At this time, however, Germany was seeking to consolidate her "place in the sun," having recently acquired colonies in West, East and southern Africa, and German editorial writers and cartoonists were enraged by the British assumption of their own superiority. Continual remarks about "British landgrabbing" and "English covetousness" in the German Press had led the British Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton, to reproach it for its "unprovoked and needless attacks upon England." One German paper primly replied: "The German Press does not want Lord George Hamilton's advice. . . . The Secretary of State for India would do better to trouble himself less about the German Press and more about the duties of his office and, for example, to think how he can avoid the menacing famine in India." The papers even claimed that a dock strike at Hamburg was instigated and supported by British capitalists.

A month before the Jubilee procession paraded through the streets of London, a German editorial said shrilly that "England foments hatred between the nations, sets on foot revolutions and wars in order . . . to play at catchball in other parts of the world." Even the Kaiser, nicknamed "William the Witless" by the British, was infected by the Press feud between the two countries, and believed that the British government might be contemplating an attack on German colonies in Africa.

While Chamberlain cries out that the Indian cloth of the royal mantle is on fire – a reference to the outbreak of nationalist violence in India in 1897 – two English officers gleefully stamp it out.

European Foreign Ministers scrutinize an "imperial" version of the giant water lily named after Victoria, muttering, "Big, certainly, but a bit ragged round the edges."

"What use is one pretzel among so many?" asks a German cartoonist as a fat Victoria on top of a leering lion drops a symbolic crumb to the starving masses of India.

pretensions." Delcassé was castigated for not being even firmer: far from acting as French Foreign Minister, declared one columnist, he had shown himself to be nothing more than a "foreign" minister. To British demands that Marchand be recalled without negotiations and without concessions, the influential *Le Matin* headlined: "No! The only response worthy of France!"

Yet even while the nationalist Press was responding in such virulent terms, other more moderate journals realized – as Delcassé did – that war was impossible. Delcassé was a realist: "We have nothing but arguments and they have the troops," he admitted sagely. And anyway he was, despite his public utterances, convinced that the challenge to France did not come from Britain. "England is a rival and competitor whose conduct is often harsh and disagreeable," he told one colleague, "but England is not an enemy, and above all England is not *the* enemy . . . if only Russia, France and England could conclude an alliance against Germany!"

Neither he nor the moderate Press wanted war over "a marshy and unhealthy village," as *Le Matin* described Fashoda. And even Clemenceau backed Delcassé with the view that "France cannot think of throwing herself into a war for the possession of some African marshes when the German is camped at Metz and Strasbourg."

It was this moderation that persuaded Delcassé that it was safe to withdraw from Fashoda unconditionally (Marchand, as it happened, had already left – without instructions – and the French case could never have been supported), but he could surely never have predicted the reaction this caused in France. "The feeling of rage and wild desire for vengeance," wrote the *Daily Telegraph*, "exceeds in degree the outbursts of hatred which the loss of Alsace-Lorraine provoked against Germany a generation ago." On the evidence of statements in the French nationalist Press, this view does not seem overstated. "England treats us with such hostility and contempt," protested *L'Aurore*, "that we will be obliged at one time or another to go to war with her." And the extreme nationalist paper *La Patrie* announced dramatically: "*Le duel sans merci est commencé.*" – "The duel to the death has begun." *L'Autorité* thundered: "England is the enemy of yesterday, today and tomorrow," while the *Echo de Paris* emphasized to its readers that "England is the eternal enemy."

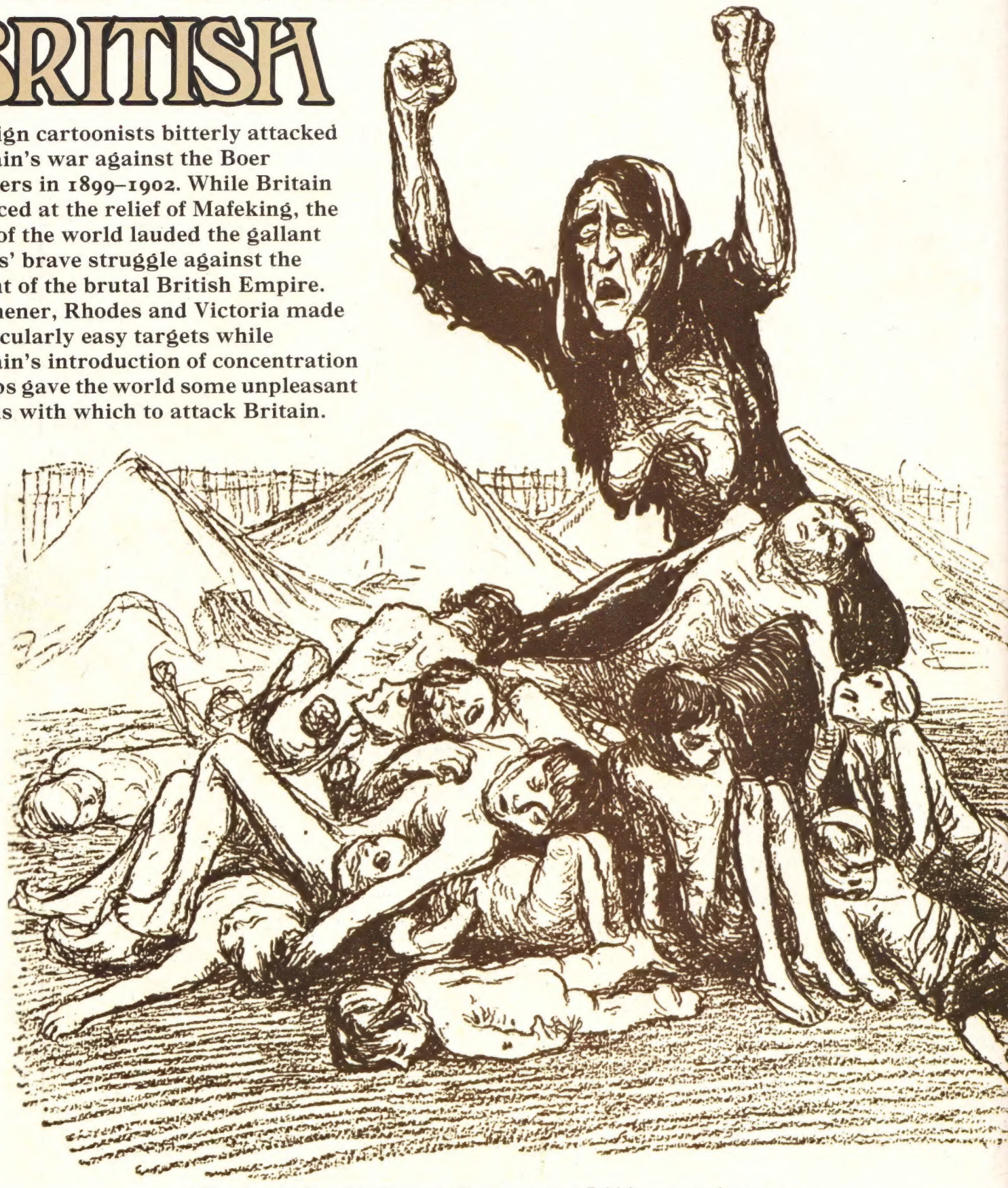
Yet it all blew over surprisingly quickly. It had anyway been somewhat artificial: France had been riven at the same time by the Dreyfus affair, when the case of a Jewish officer falsely accused and sentenced for treason had revealed a startling conflict between republicans and royalists of Church and Army.

In the popular Press, nevertheless, the effects of Fashoda were enduring, and despite the rise of Germany, little appeared in France that indicated the identity of interests that would soon lead Britain and France to become allies. A popular novelist, Captain Danrit, wrote a book in 1895 called *La Guerre de Demain* (*Tomorrow's War*) about the supposedly approaching conflict with Germany, but in 1901, after the Fashoda humiliation, he wrote another called *La Guerre Fatale* about the "inevitable" war to settle final accounts with Britain. As late as 1903, during his successful visit to Paris which prepared the ground for the *Entente Cordiale*, Edward VII was greeted by angry shouts of "Vive Fashoda!" and "Vive Marchand!"

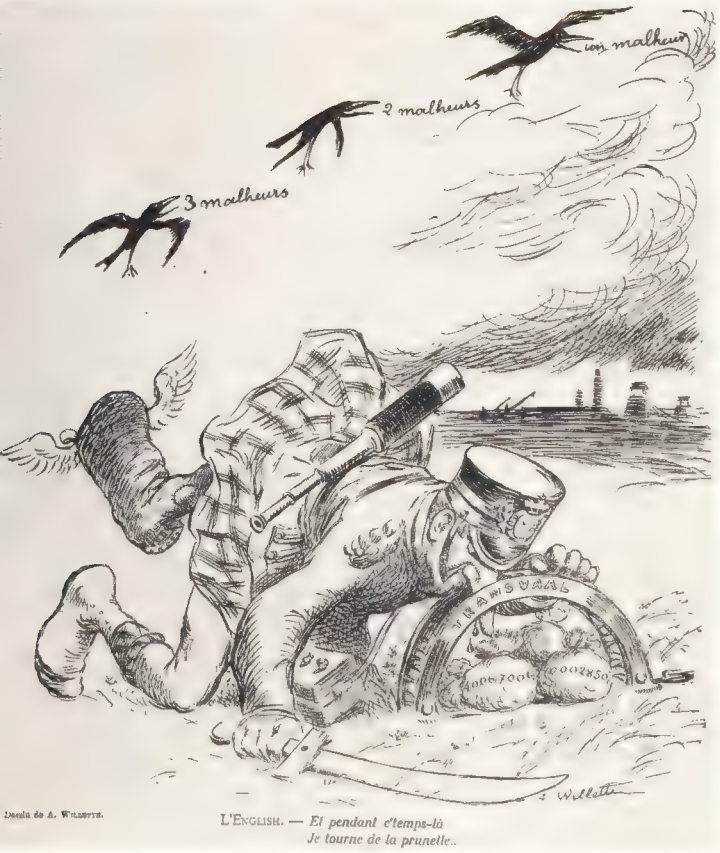
Not surprisingly, anti-British feeling rose to a crescendo during the Boer War – in no other country was condemnation of Britain's activities in South Africa more vociferous than in France. Various militant cartoons of the time give striking expression to this indignation: in one, Cecil Rhodes's "funeral monument raised by the Boer collection" is shown erected on a heap of skulls; in another a portly John Bull is led a merry dance by the elusive Boer gadfly; in yet another, entitled "the proverbial gallantry of the English soldier," a brutal English soldier is shown kicking a helpless woman in a concentration camp. To the French, the Boer War seemed a classic example of a big power bullying a small one, and provided a welcome opportunity to work off resentments which had been accumulating since the start of the 19th Century.

THE BRUTISH BRITISH

Foreign cartoonists bitterly attacked Britain's war against the Boer farmers in 1899–1902. While Britain rejoiced at the relief of Mafeking, the rest of the world lauded the gallant Boers' brave struggle against the might of the brutal British Empire. Kitchener, Rhodes and Victoria made particularly easy targets while Britain's introduction of concentration camps gave the world some unpleasant truths with which to attack Britain.



A French artist drew this picture of a Boer woman in a British concentration camp, surrounded by a pile of dead Boer children with her fists thrown up in defiance and despair.



The French see Britain caught by the nose in the Transvaal, lured by greed for gold. Kruger's saintly boot adds insult to injury.

A German cartoonist has the doctor in charge of this field hospital saying: "We doctors get the same view of the English as the Boers – from the rear!"

In a bitter French cartoon drawn at the height of the war, a skeletal Britannia picks her way across the graves of thousands of colonial soldiers who have died in her service.

The British Case and the World's Reply

In 1899, the British government and Press insisted that it was Britain's duty to go to the aid of the *Uitlanders* – the non-Boer whites – threatened by President Kruger's discriminatory policies in the Transvaal republic. It was also necessary to defend Britain's reputation as the greatest colonial power on earth, an image she could not see threatened by a few rebellious farmers.

To their surprise, the rest of the world did not agree. For a start, these were whites they were fighting instead of natives, and Kruger's very effective propaganda machine painted the Boers as a plucky, defenceless and peace-loving people, fighting for their homes and families against the brutal British – a message soon taken up by anti-British newspapers in Europe.

The German Press, already involved in a vituperative campaign against the British, were not curbed by Chancellor Bülow's directive: "With regard to the Transvaal crisis, our Press should adopt a cool, quiet and business-like tone." On the contrary, they irresponsibly published any rumour they heard. Thus the British never lost less than 3,500 men and 17 guns, and were credited with everything from shooting doctors attending to the wounded to raping all Boer women falling into their hands.

The French, too, still enraged by the Fashoda incident, were equally hostile, while their cartoons displayed a hatred of Britain that had never been surpassed in the moments of bitterest resentment against Germany.

A French cartoon shows a ferocious-looking Victoria on the warpath, a reference to the widely held view that Britain had pushed the Boers into a war they did not want.

Uncle Paul, standing grimly in front of the door to the Transvaal mines, says to Victoria and a bullying John Bull, "Old chap, this time you've picked the wrong door."

Kruger, surrounded by his Boer fighters, reassures a kneeling Victoria: "Don't worry, old lady, you are not dethroned – except in the opinion of decent people."

L'ANGLETERRE, ÉTERNEL CHAMPION DE LA JUSTICE, PROTÈGE LES FAIBLES

This French cartoon attacks Britain as a hypocrite for claiming to be the defender of the weak and then crushing the supposedly inoffensive Kruger into the ground.

Kruger gives Victoria a beating. The words "dum dum" refer to the expanding bullets alleged to have been used by the British at Modder River where they were defeated.

Not so Splendid Isolation

Judging by foreign pamphlets, humorous magazines and newspapers during the Boer War, the "splendid isolation" of which Britain had been so proud looked alarmingly like becoming a permanent state of affairs.

One pamphlet in particular, published by a Franco-Boer society in 1900, was a masterpiece of invective. Having first quoted letters "proving" that British soldiers robbed the dead, wounded and imprisoned after the Battle of Elandslaagte, it goes on to give the cause of the war. According to its view, after the Jameson Raid Chamberlain cunningly made public apologies to Kruger while instructing Rhodes to form secret societies among the Uitlanders in preparation for another rebellion. Rhodes then returned to England to preach a holy war.

The pamphlet then asks the question: "Why do we support the Boers?" and then gives the slightly irrelevant answer: "English history is nothing but a long list of treason and crimes against our country."

After citing the English victory at Agincourt and the burning of Joan of Arc as proof, it says that England "is our hereditary enemy, is our enemy today and will be our enemy tomorrow. The Englishman is the organizer of conspiracies which undermine us and coalitions which both weaken and ruin us." After pages and pages in the same vein, the pamphlet ends up grandly: "England is not just our adversary: she is our would-be executioner."

A grinning "John Bullfrog" Kitchener squats on concentration-camp victims, whose deaths were one of the biggest scandals of the war.

Wearing his characteristic monocle, Joseph Chamberlain, British Colonial Secretary during the Boer War, rakes up the dead in this powerful French cartoon. Most of the world blamed Chamberlain for the war, though he had made many attempts to avert its outbreak.

This grotesque French caricature of Rhodes shows him looking drunkenly over money he made out of the gold- and diamond-mines at Johannesburg and Kimberley.

II. "May God Punish England!"

In view of France's hostility to Britain and the Empire it is at first difficult to understand the gradual thaw in Anglo-French relations after about 1900. In 1898 Britain and France nearly went to war and yet six years later they were able to conclude the *Entente Cordiale*. Furthermore, in 1907 Britain concluded an alliance with France's ally, Russia, a country which she had traditionally regarded with extreme suspicion and with which she had recently been in conflict in Asia. This triple *entente* of Britain, France and Russia was to prove, militarily and diplomatically, more than a match for the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy formed in 1882. How was this *rapprochement* possible? In part due to the rise of Germany and the increase in Anglo-German rivalry as Germany began to acquire her own empire as a challenge to Britain's. France and Britain drew together in the face of a common threat.

Much has been written on the inevitability of the 1914–18 War due to the long-standing enmity of Britain and Germany. In fact, there had never been an anti-British tradition in Germany comparable to that of France. Among the few exceptions were the poet Heinrich Heine and the philosopher Nietzsche.

Heine spent much of his life in Paris and shared the anti-British (and anti-Prussian) prejudices of many French intellectuals. Heine called the English "a puritan, repulsive people – stiff, homely, egotistical, narrow," and England a country "enveloped in industrial smoke, exuding a grey, suffocating tedium." Nietzsche was also pro-French and shared Heine's anti-British prejudices. As he observed sardonically: "Man, after all, does not really desire happiness; only the Englishman does that," thereby putting the Englishman beyond the pale of humanity altogether. Nietzsche repeatedly took up the old themes of England's "bigotry," her "shopkeeper mentality," her obsession with money and trade. This obsession he regarded as at the root of Britain's imperial expansion. Like Heine, he railed at British "perfidy," and the unimaginative quality of English life.

But Germans were not on the whole anti-British. On the contrary, many Germans (as both the Kaiser and Hitler were later to do) stressed that the English were ethnically, culturally and temperamentally their "cousins" and that they had no cause to quarrel. Indeed, German mercenaries had often fought for Britain, and Germans admired British democratic and parliamentary institutions, the traditional British virtues of diplomacy, common sense, fair play, and English letters. Goethe regarded the English as far more practical and level-headed than the Germans and the German novelist Theodor Fontane described the English as "worldly-wise and sagacious," with immense practical experience in running an empire. The German dramatist and critic Otto Ludwig accounted for the inferiority of German to English literature with reference to the fact that Britain possessed a great capital city, Empire and Navy, and English writers a greater cosmopolitanism and breadth of experience in consequence. And many Germans regarded an English education as a status symbol. Even Admiral von Tirpitz, the architect of the German Navy, the building of which did so much to exacerbate Anglo-German tensions after 1900, sent his daughters to school at Cheltenham Ladies' College.

The decline in Anglo-German relations began when Germany acquired imperial ambitions in the mid-1880s. The change was slow in coming; it is normally associated with Bismarck, Chancellor until 1890. But his Anglophobia – his hatred of Gladstone and the Liberals, his testy remark about Victoria's family being "the stud-farm of Europe" – was quite superficial. He assured Reichstag members in 1889 that Germany "walked hand in hand with England," which he praised as "the greatest colonial power on earth." Yet in 1902 the German Ambassador in London declared: "I wouldn't give twopence for Anglo-German relations."

Many related factors explain the change: Germany's diplomatic isolation, her determination to build up her military and industrial might, the ensuing naval race with Britain, her growing colonial ambitions as a means of establishing herself as a fully-fledged nation, the peculiar whims of Wilhelm II, emotionally torn between his stern Prussian father and his mother, Victoria's daughter.

Colonial rivalry played a considerable part in this. But colonies were seldom acquired for their own sake: most statesmen viewed with distaste the prospect of acquiring and upholding probably expensive chunks of overseas territory. Bismarck himself had long denied having any colonial aspirations and resisted suggestions from various pressure groups that Germany, too, should acquire colonies. He declared in a Reichstag debate in 1889 that he was "no man for colonies" and likened the idea of Germany needing colonies to the hankering of a Polish nobleman for silks when he has not even a shirt to his back.

Yet all, in the end, grabbed colonies in Africa because that was where European interests were played out: none could afford to stand aside. As Bismarck remarked in 1888: "My map of Africa lies in Europe. Here lies Russia and here lies France, and we are in the middle. That is my map of Africa." As a latecomer Germany feared having the door to Africa shut in her face. It was this that prompted the struggle for what Bülow, later Chancellor, was to call in 1897 a "place in the sun," in which Britain had basked for so long unmolested.

Within a matter of years, Germany had acquired South-West Africa, Togoland and the Cameroons, New Guinea and much of East Africa. By 1892 Germany was on the way to fulfilling Wilhelm II's wild imperialist dreams of an east–west *Mittelafrika*.

Germany had arrived on the world political stage, noisily and with all the bluster of a young actor anxious to impress on his first night. Attitudes were bound to change. Just as anxious Britons could no longer look on Germany as a "land of poets and thinkers," Germany came increasingly to regard Britain as an elderly declining power, frantically holding on to what she had and everywhere in the way of younger, more virile nations. German cartoons reflect this: one shows Edward VII imperiously telling Germany to keep out of "his" oceans, another has France and Spain appealing to a gross and senile "Uncle Bull" to stop the German baby playing in the Moroccan pond. Germans came to believe that England had always been a hereditary enemy, which she had never been.

The German colonial drive between

Edward Melts the French

While Prince of Wales, Edward VII had always been fond of France and he was popular, too, with the French, who looked on his friends and his racing with an indulgent eye.

But at the turn of the century a wave of anti-British feeling swept the country, inspired by the Anglo-French conflict over the Upper Nile and by the Boer War. Cartoons of Edward turned into gross caricatures, like the ones on this page. In 1900, Edward prudently abandoned his annual spring holiday on the Riviera, but in 1903, after consultation with the Foreign Office, he decided to visit Paris to retrieve his popularity.

The trip was, surprisingly, an enormous success. Early on he went to the theatre and melted the glacial atmosphere by remarking to the leading lady: "I remember applauding you in London where you represented all the grace and spirit of France." The crowds who had been shouting *"Vive les Boers!"* and even *"Vive Jeanne d'Arc!"* at the beginning of the visit ended by cheering *"Notre bon Edouard!"* Mutual mistrust was melting. The following year they signed a treaty of friendship, the *Entente Cordiale*.

"Baby" Edward, a male version of his squat mother, views the blood oozing from the South African section of his new toy, the world.

Edward's gross face looks out from under the skirts of a leering Britannia in this cartoon published at his coronation.

A French postcard shows the playboy-king with a bottle in one hand and racing binoculars over his shoulder.

1884 and 1918 was carefully prepared by a number of publicists and was part of the urge for *Weltpolitik* – global power politics – as it came to be known. This was not the work of a few cranks and fanatics alone, nor was it directed specifically at Britain at first. It was motivated, however, by a feeling that Britain had for too long enjoyed a monopoly of Empire and that other nations also had a right to a share of the colonial cake. Envious looks were cast at Britain's colonies of settlement like Australia and Canada and at the wealth they represented. Carl Peters, explorer of East Africa, admirer of Kipling and founder of the Society for German Colonization, urged his fellow countrymen to come alive to the great colonial idea: "In the past and future the earth will be taken by the cleverest men of all countries. This fact should be known to us Germans and give us courage to do the same."

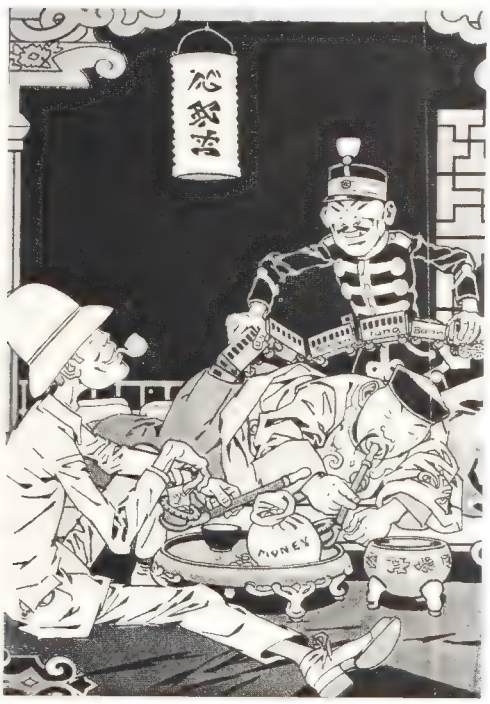
Although at first Germany wished only to be treated as an equal by Britain, gradually and inevitably German colonial expansion acquired an ideological basis and an anti-British edge. Just as Britain liked to justify her imperial activities in terms of bringing untold benefits to grateful savages, and France prided herself on her *mission civilisatrice*, so Germany began to see colonization as a corollary of her spiritual mission.

One of the great German myths of the pre-First World War period, to which even Thomas Mann subscribed, was that German *Kultur* had to be upheld as a counterforce to the decadent, materialistic civilization of Britain and France. Thus, youthful, vigorous Germany is contrasted with aged Albion, as in a cartoon of 1909 which shows an elderly looking English football team – "the colossally experienced and select English" led by a gross Edward VII – pitted against "the famous German team at the top of its form" which is about to provide some long-overdue opposition in the great "global ball game" of diplomacy. Other German cartoons of the pre-war period are in the same tone of resentful defiance mixed with malicious glee at England's discomfiture.

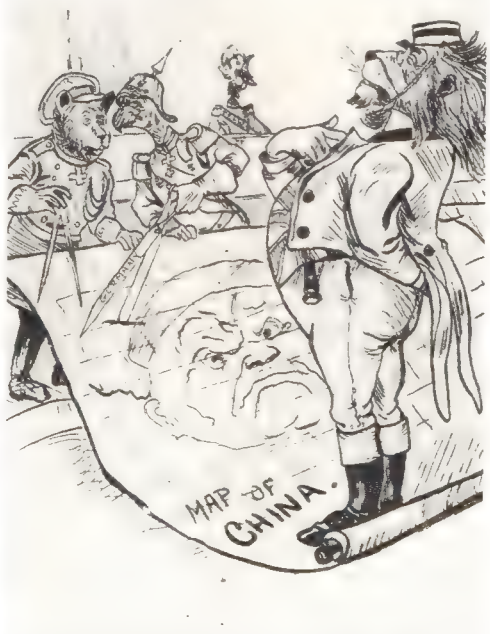
It is no accident that Anglo-German relations became worse after the accession of Wilhelm II in 1888 and the new course which Germany then followed. Wilhelm had a permanent love-hate relationship with Britain, reacting against the pro-British sentiments of his father. His relations with his uncle, Edward VII, were notoriously uncordial: as a child Wilhelm is reported to have said after having been given a nose-bleed by Edward: "Thank God that's the last drop of English blood gone." But he respected his grandmother Victoria and repeatedly expressed his affection for his English "cousins." It is doubtful whether he ever wanted war with Britain in 1914.

Two appalling *faux pas* probably did more than anything else to convince the British that he was against them. In 1896, after the abortive Jameson Raid that was intended to topple the Transvaal into Britain's lap, he sent a telegram to President Kruger "expressing sincere congratulations that, supported by your people and without appealing for help to friendly Powers, you have succeeded by your energetic action against armed bands that invaded your country as disturbers of the peace, and have therefore been able to restore peace and safeguard the independence of the country from outside attacks." At once the spectre arose of a permanent German presence in the Transvaal dominating the economy of southern Africa and thus being in a position to challenge Britain on the Cape route to India, a major imperial sea lane. In view of Kruger's toast to Germany a year earlier as a "grown-up power that would stop England from kicking the child republic," it seemed to British opinion that Kruger and Wilhelm were plotting together against British power in South Africa.

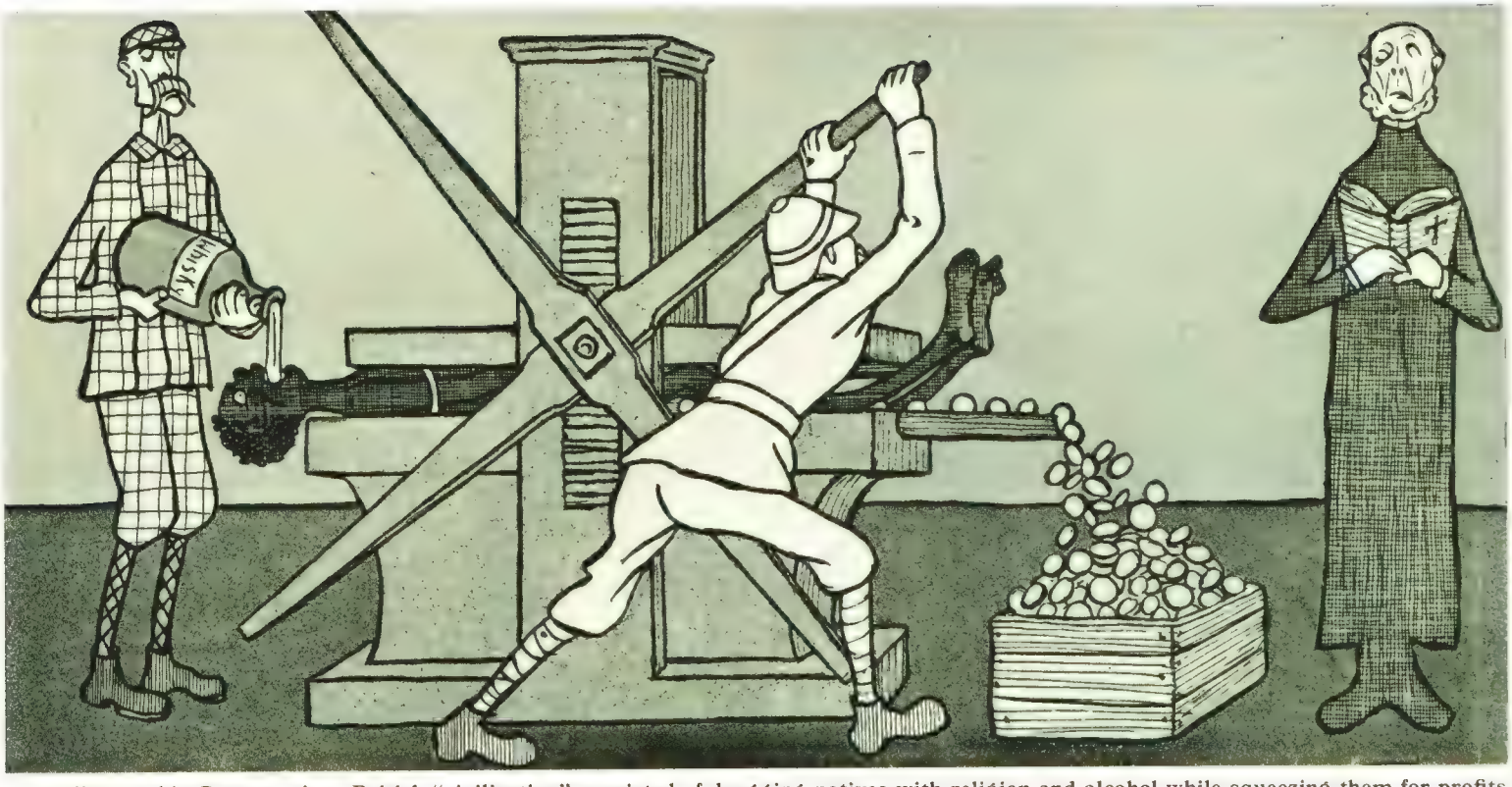
An amazing interview in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1908 did not help to soothe tempers. In it, Wilhelm tried in honeyed words to assure Britain that, even if the bulk of German opinion was anti-British, he was not and had repeatedly shown it in word and deed. He called the English "mad, mad as March hares" and blamed the British Press for whipping up anti-German sentiment and portraying him personally an ogre. It was true, he said, that German opinion was hostile to Britain during the Boer War, but he alone had snubbed the Boer delegation on their European tour. Was this the action of an enemy? Further, he claimed as proof of his friendship with England that "by a matter of curious coincidence" he had worked out a plan of campaign for the Boer War which was much the same as that employed by Lord Roberts! The interview enraged British opinion, which



A simplistic German cartoon sees the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 as a means for the two to divide up the spoils of China.



In an American cartoon, John Bull tells Russia and France that he wants the lion's share in the 1898 rush for Chinese ports.



According to this German view, British "civilization" consisted of drugging natives with religion and alcohol while squeezing them for profits.

in turn made Wilhelm more anti-British still. He, like many Germans, became more and more convinced of a plot by Britain against Germany to encircle her, even attributing it to the devilish cunning of the "Satan" Edward VII, who received a very bad Press in Germany and was widely regarded as a devious, Germanophobe libertine.

Wilhelm was not alone in regarding England as a menace. Other German publicists came to regard her as the chief obstacle to German ambitions and a settling of accounts with her as inevitable. As Friedrich von Bernhardi wrote: "At every step we take England will oppose us." In 1896 Admiral Georg Alexander von Müller wrote that any war must aim at breaking Britain's "world domination in order to lay free the necessary colonial possessions for the central European states [primarily Germany] who need to expand." Hans Delbrück argued that British control of the seas had to be broken and, to this end, a powerful German navy created. There were others too who argued that Germany must lead the struggle against England's obsolete hegemony and naval supremacy. Friedrich Meinecke declared that "England is fighting against the spirit of modern development" and Otto Hintze hoped that Germany might act as "liberator" to the nations "oppressed by the yoke of English supremacy."

In 1915 the economist Werner Sombart wrote a book called *Traders and Heroes* in which he contrasted the grasping, "shopkeeper" spirit of England with the heroic mood of Germany. Sombart saw the war as a crusade against everything Britain stood for – materialism, opportunism, democracy, decadent Western European values in general.

The argument that the British Empire was essentially a base money-making enterprise was also one repeatedly hammered home by the historian Heinrich von Treitschke. Treitschke declared with huge scorn that "the hypocritical English people, with the Bible in one hand and a pipe of opium in the other, possesses no redeeming qualities." He said sweepingly that "the English have a commercial spirit, a love of money which has killed every sentiment of honour and every distinction of right and wrong."

During and after the First World War the anti-British feeling in Germany grew ever more virulent. The main targets were still Britain's mercenary spirit, her hypocrisy and brutality in the colonies, particularly Ireland and India. One German cartoon shows a British officer butchering Indian protesters with one hand, hypocritically grasping a Bible in the other. *"Gott strafe England!"* – "May God punish England!" was a normal wartime greeting even among schoolboys. German propaganda also tried to sow discord among England's allies and ridiculed British reliance on the Dominions as "England's last hope," while making indignant noises over England's alliance with reactionary Tsarist Russia.

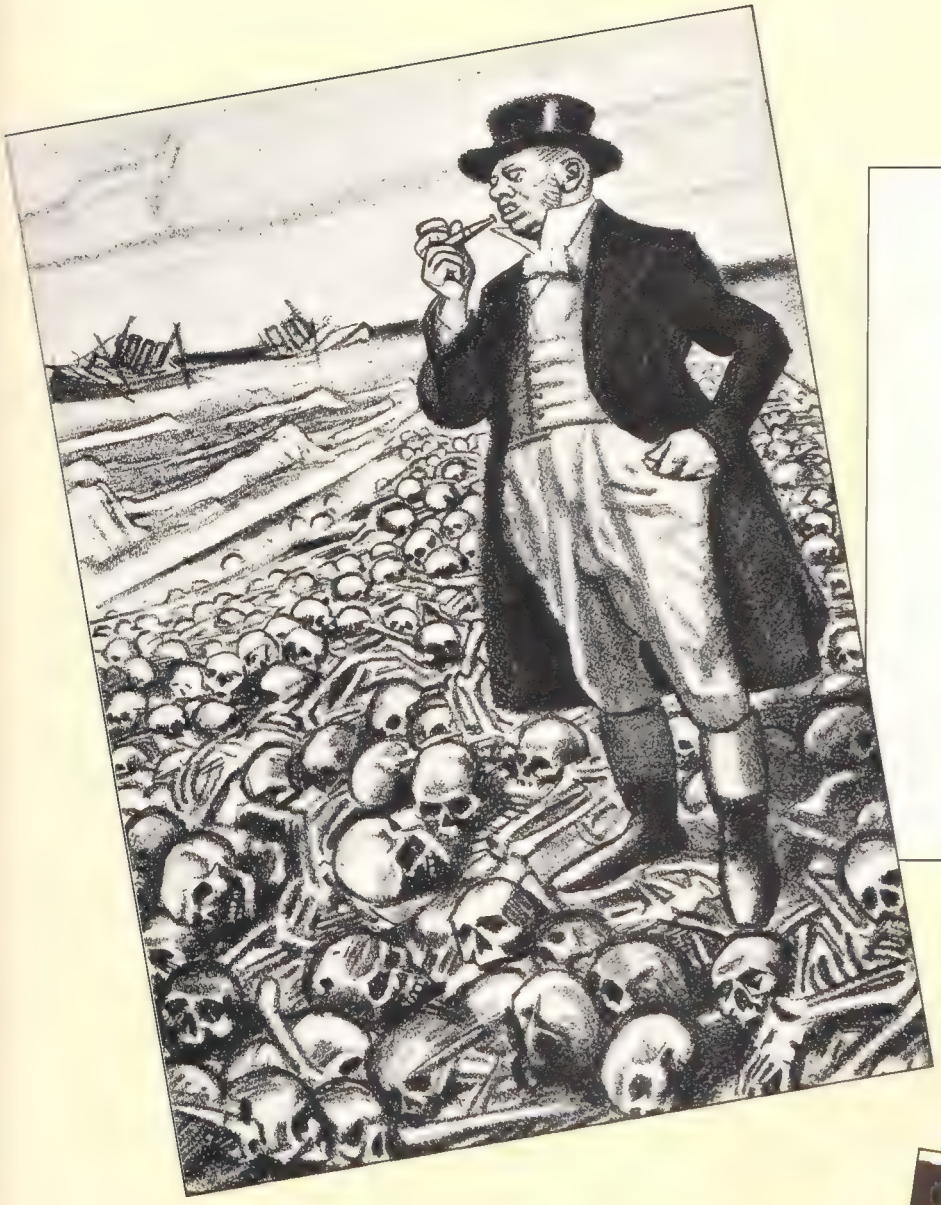
One of the most remarkable expressions of wartime anti-British frenzy was Ernst Lissauer's "Hymn of Hate against England" written in 1914:

He is known to you all, he is known to you all,
He crouches behind the dark grey flood,
Full of envy, rage, of craft, of gall,

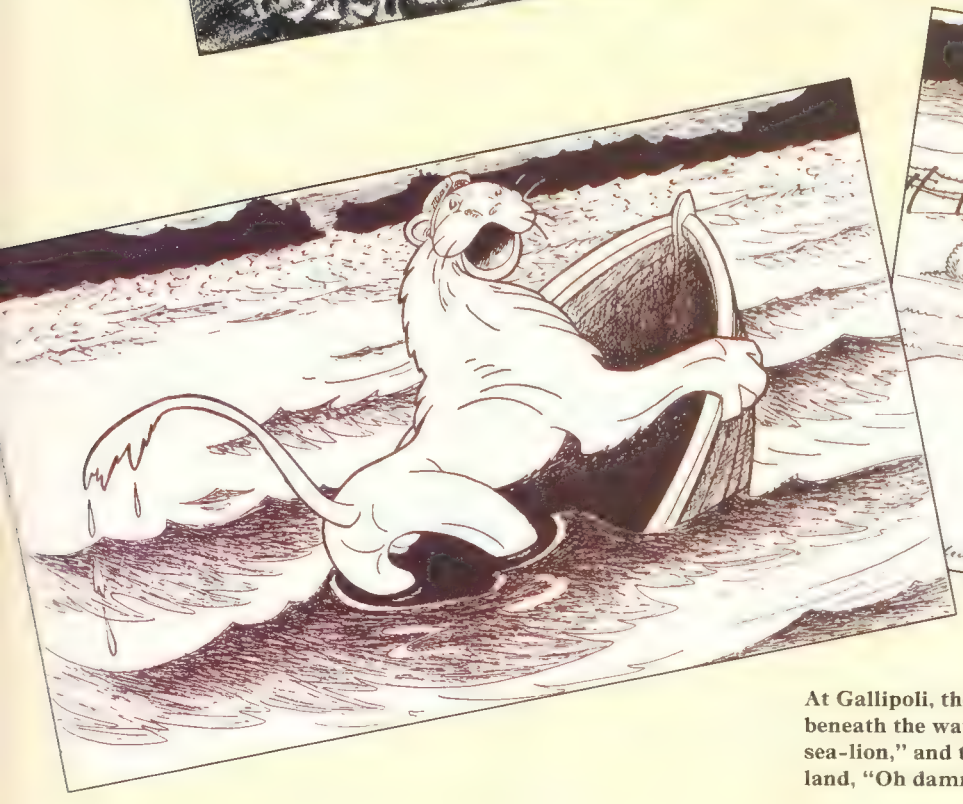
continued on p. 2568

OUR ENEMY'S ENEMY

Though most German propaganda during the First World War was directed against Britain over her actions on the Western Front, Britain's imperial disasters, like those shown here concerning Gallipoli and Kut-al-Amara, also provided ammunition for Germany's gleeful cartoonists.

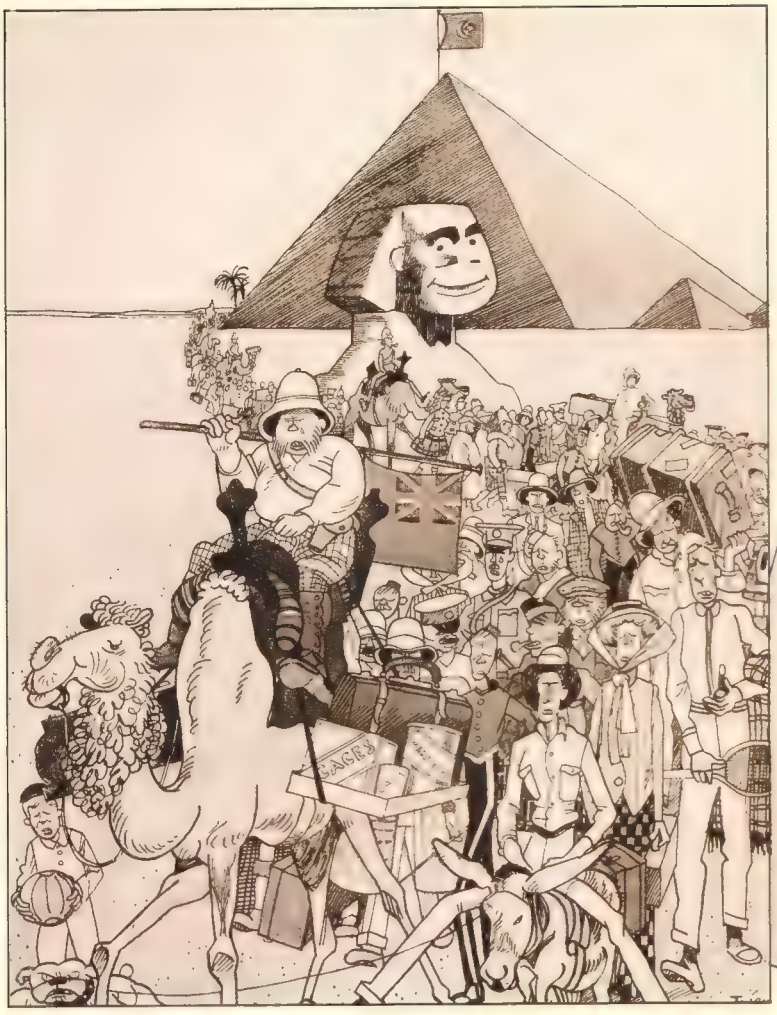


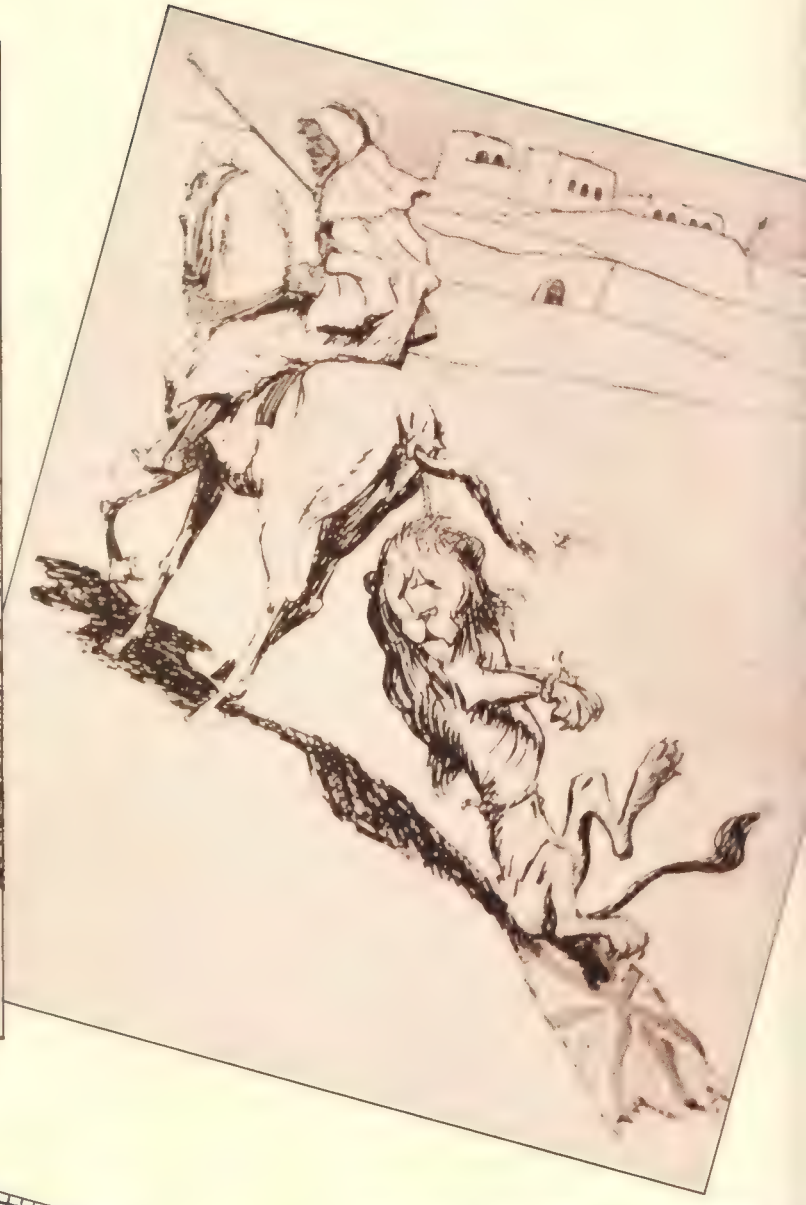
A savage John Bull with the skulls of the British dead at his feet looks at the sinking ships off Gallipoli and wonders whether more "supplies" will get through.



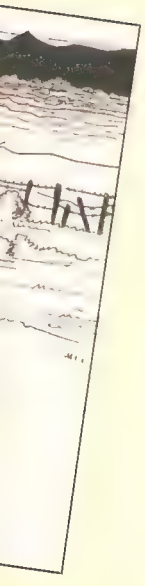
At Gallipoli, the British lion sinking beneath the waves says: "Oh damn, I'm not a sea-lion," and then barks ruefully on the land, "Oh damn, I'm not a land-lion either!"

"The Flight of the Children of Britain out of Egypt" was the title of this optimistic German view of the progress of the war in North Africa and the Middle East.





A mounted Turk drags a bound, mangy English lion across the deserts of Persia, a reference to the disastrous British defeat at the town of Kut-al-Amara in 1916.



This cartoon identifies Britain's new weapon as Lord Kitchener's big mouth.

Cut off by waves that are thicker than blood . . .
Throughout the Fatherland make it heard.
We will never forego our hate,
We have but one single hate,
We love as one, we hate as one,
We have one foe, and one alone –
ENGLAND!

Nazi propaganda before and during the Second World War resurrected many of the First World War themes – Britain's perfidy, her shopkeeper mentality, her smug assumption that she had a right to police the world. She could not be forgiven for "stealing" Germany's colonies in 1919. The traditional hypocrisy of Britain is exposed in propaganda films like *Ohm Krüger*, *Der Fuchs von Glenarvon* and *Mein Leben für Irland* which show her as a brutal oppressor of little nations like the Boers and the Irish. Songs like "We Are Sailing for England" and the "War Song against England" of 1940 are little more than up-to-date versions of the First World War "Hymn of Hate." The "War Song" runs:

We challenge the lion of England,
For the last and decisive cup.
We judge and say
An Empire breaks up.
This surely is our proudest day.
Comrade, Comrade,
The orders are here, we start right away.
BOMBS ON ENGLAND!

After the German capitulation in Tunis in 1943 a leader in the Nazi Party organ, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, raged against Britain's record in Africa: "What have the English done in Africa? Enticed by gold and diamonds, they raped the small nation of Boer farmers. In Egypt they played the same dirty game. The rest of Africa was nothing but an inexhaustible reservoir of 'black ivory.' Nowhere on African soil can the British boast any colonial or cultural achievements, they merely drew off the cream and exploited foreign labour. . . . The rape of Egypt from the Arabs, of the German colonies in 1919, of South Africa from the Dutch and now the rape of the Italian empire – that is the history of the British in Africa!"

Nazi attitudes to the Empire, however, were a curious mixture: as well as expressing indignation over British "exploitation," there was also considerable envy of the strength the Empire represented and a sneering denigration of its achievement. Though Hitler admired the Empire as an organizational feat, he regarded the British as a race in decline, and their Empire as a decadent anachronism. He prophesied its eventual collapse, and that Britain would become a second-rate satellite of America, a mere pawn in the coming struggle between America and Russia. As he wrote in his "political testament" of 1945: "The British Empire is at an end. It has been mortally wounded. The future of the British people is to die of hunger and tuberculosis in their cursed island." The British, he acknowledges, were "great colonizers," but Britain, like France and Spain, "drained herself in vain colonial enterprises" when she should have concentrated more on home affairs. The Dominions Hitler dismisses as "excrescences" without soul or culture.

German attitudes towards the British Empire lasted a mere 60 years or so: Russian views on the same subject can be traced further back and still repay close attention today. Initially the conflict lay between two great empires; but long before the end of imperial Russia in 1917, the British Empire came under fire – as it still does – from Communists, whose views have proved remarkably unsusceptible to the evolution of the Commonwealth and the collapse of the Empire.

In the 19th Century, the two expanding empires came into conflict in a swathe of territory from the eastern Mediterranean to China. The "Great Game" between Britain and Russia in the 19th Century was played out on a vast field including Europe, Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet, China, Korea and the Balkans. Russia, more even than France and Germany, was the traditional bogyman of 19th-Century Britain. To English Liberals and democrats, Russia was a barbaric, backward and despotic state, to Conservatives a constant menace to the British Empire, and particularly to India. Tsar Paul I and Alexander I both attempted to interest Napoleon in a joint invasion of India. Paul wrote: "The sufferings under which the population of India groans have inspired France and Russia with the liveliest interest . . . the two governments have resolved to unite their forces in order to liberate India from the tyrannical and barbarous yoke of the English".

Britain feared Russian ambitions both in Central Asia and in the Mediterranean (where dominance over the Straits of Constantinople might give Russia control over the Suez Canal, the lifeline to India). In 1885, after a dispute over the Afghanistan border town of Penjdeh, relations were so strained that the Stationery Office even printed documents, in case they became necessary, declaring a state of war with Russia!

If the British regarded the expansion of the Russian Empire with alarm, the Russian Press and Russian individuals were equally hostile towards the British Empire. At the time of the Indian Mutiny, in common with many other Europeans, the Russian Press accused Britain of parasitic rule in India, directed to profit and not civilization. A Russian officer, Captain Terentiev, wrote that India was being destroyed by the poisonous plant of British rule: "Sick to death, the natives are waiting for a physician from the North," (just the sort of statement that reinforced the British in their view that Russia was simply awaiting the moment to strike through Afghanistan or Tibet).

The Russian General Staff was violently anti-British; one of their number, General Sobolev, said: "England lays a heavy hand on her dependent peoples. She reduces them to a state of slavery only that English trade may profit and Englishmen grow rich. . . . England is a vampire sucking the last drop of blood out of India." General Annenkoff portrayed the Indians as groaning under the brutal yoke of English capitalists, and General Skobelev (not to be confused with Sobolev) saw the sub-continent as in a seething ferment of unrest: "Everyone who has concerned himself with the question of the position of the English in India has declared it to be precarious, and has said that it is solely maintained by force of arms. . . . The contact of even an insignificant force with the frontier of India might lead to a general insurrection throughout the country, and to be the collapse of the British Empire"

Ohm Krüger

In the propaganda war between Britain and Germany during the Second World War, Germany won one battle at least. While Britain was still painting all Germans as identical bullet-headed sadists, the Nazis produced a cleverly twisted view of the Boer War in the film, *Ohm Krüger*.

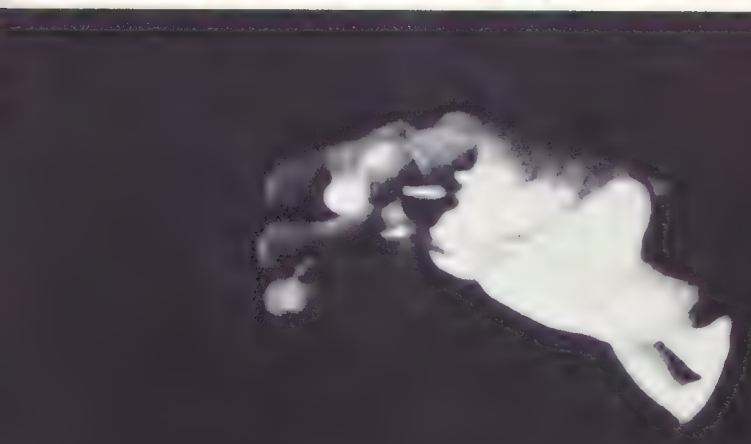
Partly scripted by Goebbels himself, the film turned well-known British characters into grotesque caricatures. Kruger is played by Emil Jannings as a saintly tragic hero – he is literally sent blind by news of British atrocities – and stands in admirable contrast to the wily old Queen Victoria (above). The War itself is seen as the Boers' brave defence against a machiavellian plot between Cecil Rhodes, Joseph Chamberlain and the Queen to grab the Transvaal gold-mines.

There is a suitably emotional sub-plot in which Kruger's son, at first the Devil's advocate, is converted to his father's cause when a British soldier tries to rape his wife. She is then imprisoned and her husband is caught while trying to see her in a camp, and is hanged on a Boer Golgotha, crying, "I die for the Fatherland!"

The film ends with Kruger intoning prophetically: " We were a small people. Great nations will rise to beat Britain to a pulp. Then the world will be clear for a better life."

The hanging tree stands bleakly against the skyline above the concentration camp while women look on in a scene that is heavily symbolic of the death of Christ.

Cecil Rhodes (below), with his brooding eyes, black moustache and curled lip, is made to resemble a Hollywood gangster.



The Cast List

The characters in the film bear little resemblance to the figures from British history books. Kruger himself towers like an Old Testament prophet (centre) over his people's fight for freedom.

His opponents, however, are of a lesser breed. Queen Victoria, while knocking back bottles of whisky, is given to such statements as "It must be easy to trick the old fool [Kruger]" and "If there's gold to be found, then of course it's our country." She dies a deranged, wrinkled old hag, watched over by the Prince of Wales who has been recalled unwillingly from a line of Paris chorus girls.

Cecil Rhodes, the originator of the plot, is featured as the archetypal screen villain, while the Commandant of a Belsen-like concentration camp looks remarkably like Winston Churchill.

Even British missionaries play their part. In an astonishing parody of a church service, they hand out bibles and rifles to the blacks – a touch that aligns the British with non-Aryan races – while singing the National Anthem in front of an altar draped with the Union Jack.

Moon-faced British missionaries sanctimoniously hand out bibles and rifles to natives.

Dressed in his Boer uniform, Kruge
son stretches out through the barb
wire to touch his incarcerated w

John Brown, Queen Victoria's faithful Highland servant, replenishes her glass of "medicine" – Scotch whisky

Kruger stands by Lobengula, the Matabele chieftain, whose land has been taken over by Rhodes, in a romanticized scene of reconciliation between former enemies who have been united by their common hatred of the British.

III. Capitalist Exploiter of the Foreign Masses

In some ways, Soviet attitudes towards the British Empire differ little from those of their Tsarist predecessors – common to both is the emphasis on British brutality and greed and the self-righteous conviction of the beneficence of Russian rule. Though detailed political and economic analysis is professional and realistic, material for public consumption is often grossly oversimplified, as an analysis of Communist views towards Ireland (p. 2576) – which owe a great deal to traditional Marxist attitudes – makes clear.

The traditional Marxist-Tsarist hostility to British Imperialism was exacerbated in Bolshevik Russia by British intervention on behalf of the anti-Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War from 1917–20. Early Soviet propaganda casts Britain – notably in Pudovkin's film *Storm Over Asia* – and other Western capitalist states in the role of arch-demons. With the rise of German Fascism, Britain was represented according to the official Soviet line as a "guardian angel" of Hitler, plotting with him to destroy the young Soviet Union.

Since 1945, from a position of greatly increased strength but with the same mixture of persecution mania and belligerence, Soviet propagandists have repeatedly exploited British difficulties, whilst posing as friends of the oppressed colonial peoples struggling for independence. British motives are generally regarded as suspect and dishonest, British actions being seen as directed primarily against the Socialist states. The satirical journal, *Krokodil*, has been particularly virulent; in its pages, Britain has often been seen as a villainous, top-hatted hypocrite, full of bluster but in reality a feeble henchman of the United States. In a 1949 cartoon, "Barber" Truman trims the ageing British lion's mane; another of 1967 shows the ramshackle British "ship of state" (no more than a raft), being steered with one hand by a piratic Uncle Sam.

During the Cold War, the old pre-war theme of British perfidy was revived, given an added sting by criticisms of Britain's continued association with the worst side of imperialistic capitalism. In the 1950s British support for West German rearmament was bitterly attacked, and Britain and America represented as guardians of a new "Nazi" Germany. And the Suez crisis of 1956 provided an ideal opportunity to castigate Britain for her remaining imperial pretensions (a view rendered somewhat hypocritical, perhaps, by Russia's simultaneous measures to crush attempted revolt in her own colony, Hungary). Not since the Boer War had there been such general anti-British feeling, even in countries allied to Britain. Ironically, France and Britain, so often censors of each other's imperial misdeeds, found themselves in the dock together. The anti-British hysteria of 1956 was an indication, perhaps, that old hostilities and resentments continued to slumber below the surface.

On the question of British imperialism, Soviet propaganda has often had to perform ideological gymnastics miraculous to behold. Though violently anti-Zionist, Stalin initially supported the young "Socialist" state of Israel as an enemy of British imperialism on the principle that "my enemy's enemy, however detestable, is my friend." At that time, he still regarded most of the Arab states as "lackeys" of the British war-lords and was happy to see them undermined. But in the 1950s, as Israel became identified with British (and American) imperialism, the Soviet Union switched allegiances to "Socialist" Egypt in her fight against imperialist Britain.

Other questions, too, are not amenable to a consistent anti-imperialist viewpoint. The secession of Rhodesia, for instance, was seen not as an expression of revolt by the Smith régime, but as a carefully contrived conspiracy by local and British imperialists to bamboozle world opinion and retain control of the African majority by force.

Ireland had a special place in early Communist writings, for it was regarded as a classic example of a colony. Karl Marx and his closest collaborator, Friedrich Engels, closely studied Ireland's economic and political situation, its history and social relations. Engels – who made several visits to Ireland – wrote an account of his travels of 1856 and 1869 in letters to Marx and there even exists the massive draft of a history of Ireland that Engels intended to write (he died before the work was completed). Marx described Ireland as "an agricultural district of England," supplying the latter with "corn, wool, cattle, industrial and military recruits." England in Marxist terms, in other words, was plundering an agrarian, peasant island in the form of unbridled colonial exploitation. National oppression by the English, following armed invasions, established a class of tyrannical settlers who oppressed and exploited natives.

In this situation, Marx and Engels discerned the raw material of a class struggle which was expected to lead to the gradual development of a national liberation movement. While Marx and Engels accurately saw some of the economic abuses in Ireland – like the potato famines, tenant-farming, substitution of arable farming by grazing, and eviction that caused such massive hardship and emigration in the 19th Century – they either ignored or attached little significance to sectarian tensions. Their new society was conditioned by their belief in the overriding importance of economic factors in historical evolution. In this sense Marxist philosophers have been guilty of the same mental narrowness for which they attacked their capitalist-imperialist opponents.

Marx and Engels concluded that Ireland's national liberation and social revival lay not so much with the downtrodden Irish but with international support – particularly that of the English working class. The duty of the English worker, they pointed out, was to back the right of the Irish to fight for independence. The liberation of the Irish peasantry, in turn, would be a precondition for the liberation of the English working class.

This scenario made fine rhetoric for warming up meetings but the reasoning was faulty. There was little solidarity between Irish and English workers, separated as they were by vast differences of culture, history and social attitudes. And when an attempt at Irish revolution did come in 1916, it was not led by the working classes nor by the international Communist movement. Communist teachings inspired just one Irish nationalist, James Connolly, shot for his part in the rising. In the *Irish Worker* of August 8, 1914, he wrote in hopeful Leninist

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SUEZ: THE RUSSIAN VIEW

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the reasons for Russia's traditional hostility towards Britain changed. Under the Tsars, she had come into conflict with Britain on the borders of India and the Middle East, the major areas of colonial rivalry between the two powers. After 1917, however, the Communists attacked Britain on the more general grounds that she was an imperialist power, holding down nations fighting for their freedom.

Foremost among the journals that attacked the British Empire was the satirical magazine, *Krokodil*. Founded in 1922, as a sister magazine to the Party newspaper, *Pravda*, it had a tradition from the start of employing some of the best artists and writers in the Soviet Union. The cartoons shown here appeared at the time of the Suez Crisis of 1956.

In the eyes of ***Krokodil***, the swashbuckling English lion of the 17th Century has, by this century, become a sorry-looking creature, weighed down by U.S. weapons.

A Russian view of the Suez Crisis of 1956 (during which Russia threatened war on Britain, France and Israel) pictures a bloated British capitalist sliding helplessly with his shares into the Canal, while Egypt looks proudly on.

Africa, the Middle and Far East and South-East Asia put up notices that they no longer require any imperial governesses, a message also conveyed to Russia in the same year as Suez by Hungarian revolutionaries – to no effect.

Ulster: the "Bulwark of Landlordism"

Practically the only survival of criticism of British imperialism is to be found in the current Soviet attitude towards the Ulster situation. This stems from Moscow's premise that Northern Ireland represents a classic colonial situation and can be described in terms once – with considerably more justification – applied to Ireland as a whole.

Soviet news media – mainly Moscow Radio, *Tass, Pravda* and *Izvestiya* – have consistently obscured the sectarian problems of Ireland, ignoring the fact that two-thirds of the people of Ulster are Protestants and referring to the "people" of Northern Ireland as a single, indivisible entity.

Karl Marx said in 1870: "Ireland is the bulwark of English landlordism. . . . Landlordism in Ireland is maintained solely by the English army," and Communist attitudes have changed hardly a jot since. In 1972, a Moscow Radio commentator said: "Colonial war is being fought in Ulster by the British occupation troops . . . and it is the struggle of the people of Northern Ireland for the independence of the country against the oppressors and occupationists, the British imperialists."

Protestants, in so far as their existence is acknowledged, are not counted as Irish: they are still "immigrants." The fact that they have been there for centuries is not mentioned. "The English immigration, which might have raised the standard of Irish civilization, has contented itself with the most brutal plundering of the Irish people," commented Moscow Radio in January, 1972. "The attempts of the Irish to save themselves from their present ruin . . . take the form of crimes. These are the order of the day in the agricultural districts, and are nearly all directed against the most immediate enemies, the landlords' agents, or their obedient servants, the Protestant intruders, whose large farms are made up of the potato patches of hundreds of ejected families."

There is never a hint that there may be a conflict between Protestant interests in the North and the British government. The two are seen as part of a general capitalist conspiracy to "exploit" Catholics, and the actual economics are ignored. "The Unionist Party in Ulster," Radio Moscow told its listeners in January, 1972, "carries out the political and social instructions issued by British high finance, which practices discrimination against the Catholics and which has only one aim – to maintain Ulster as a white colony of Britain at any price." Why any supposedly capitalist country should wish to retain a colony that so drains its resources is not explained.

Britain's decision to assume direct rule in Northern Ireland in March, 1972, was thus seen as a tightening of imperialist control. No concessions were made to the need to curb sectarian violence, nor any recognition that British policy took into account Catholic grievances and was directed towards establishing reform.

"This means the abolition of the last vestiges of autonomy for this British province," said Moscow Radio of the assumption of direct rule, "the British Government's decision is to all intents and purposes a concession to the demands of extremist circles in Northern Ireland. One of their leaders, the Fascist Protestant preacher, Paisley, has long called for the establishment in Ulster of a British dictatorship régime for reprisals against democratic forces."

And when British troops invaded the Catholic "no-go" areas in July, the move was seen solely as action against the "forces of democracy." No mention was made of I.R.A. terrorism. "The British occupationists have begun today mass punitive operations in Northern Ireland. Their aim is to liquidate the fortified areas of the Catholic ghettos which were formed to protect their peaceful inhabitants . . . . The British government has found itself powerless in the face of the people's struggle for social equality and political rights." As the London correspondent of *Izvestiya*, Vitaliy Kobysh, wrote in August, 1972: "Clearly, the actions of the British troops represent an attempt to crush the widespread movement for civil rights."

terms: "Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last war lord."

Some 18 months after the revolt in Dublin, the Russian Revolution of October, 1917, brought Lenin to power. He knew his Marx and closely followed the Irish question, but there was little that the new-born Soviet Union could do about Ireland, and Lenin saw very clearly the weakness of the Marxist argument concerning the Irish Revolution: the working-class movement of the "oppressor nation" was not going to inspire any revolution there, for they were "under the influence of the liberals." Thereafter, the death of Lenin, the rise of Stalin and the Second World War took Ireland right out of the Soviet Union's orbit of interest for nearly 50 years, until it was revived by the Ulster crisis.

In western Europe, in the wake of altered political alliances and the need for some sort of western European solidarity, most traditional hostilities have ceased, though western European Communists still ritually denounce British imperialism. Even if some Germans, Italians and Frenchmen still cling to the stereotype of the tweedy, pipe-sucking Englishman, the old virulence has largely disappeared, perhaps because one massive bone of contention, the Empire, is no more.

Britain's allies adopt at worst a slightly amused attitude to her adherence to the ideal of Commonwealth solidarity. One German cartoon of 1961 entitled "To new shores" showed a sadly shipwrecked Macmillan being rowed across the Channel from the sinking ship of Empire by the then German Economics Minister, Ludwig Erhard, to the buoyant vessel "Europe." Another of 1962 shows John Kennedy urging an elderly Macmillan to abandon his Gothic, ramshackle Commonwealth castle and move into the modern, functional European building. The Commonwealth and its problems are only deserving of small comment in comparison with the wider ideal of European unity. The old caricatures of imperialist Britain have almost vanished for good, along with the imperial vices and virtues that brought them forth.

Boatswain, Royal Navy, 1828

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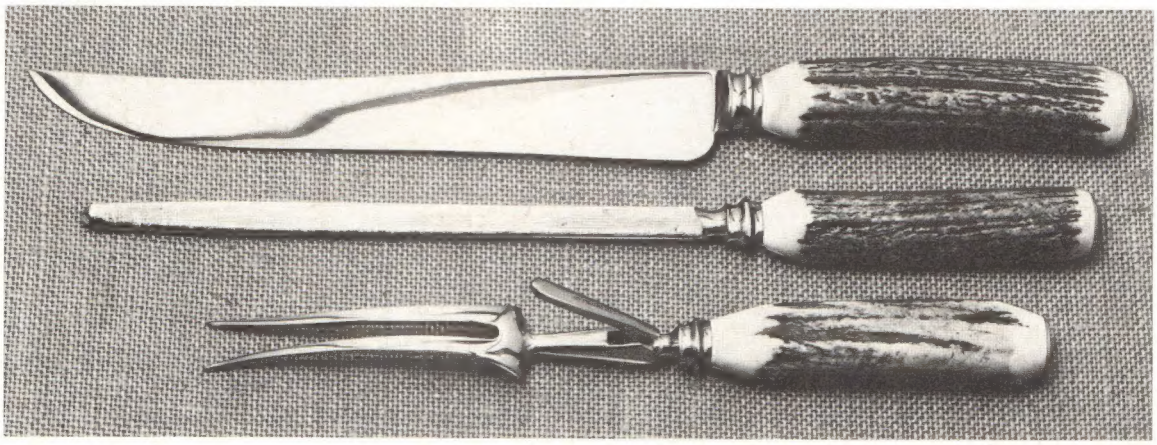

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